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A Bookman's Notebook**Case of Espionage---
But the Real Thing****William Hogan**

IF ONE SHOULD blend Louis Nizer's "My Life in Court" with the melodrama "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold," he might come up with "Strangers on a Bridge: The Case of Colonel Abel."

This is a long, absorbing personal narrative by James B. Donovan, the Harvard-trained Irish Catholic lawyer who was assigned to defend a high-level Russian spy in a New York Federal court. The spy was Rudolf Abel, for nine years head of the Soviet espionage apparatus in this country before he was captured in a Brooklyn artist's studio in August, 1957.

**Rudolf Abel**

Donovan reluctantly accepted the court's invitation to defend Abel. He saw it as one of the most unpopular defense assignments since John Adams defended the British soldiers involved in the Boston massacre of 1774. At stake, however, was the reputation of American justice, both here and abroad, including the USSR (which of course did not lift a finger to assist an expendable spy).

The prosecution sought the death penalty for Abel. Donovan thought this a bad idea, and for an interesting reason. He stated: "It is possible that in the foreseeable future an American of equal rank will be captured by Soviet Russia or an ally; at such time an exchange of pris-

oners through diplomatic channels should be considered to be in the best national interests of the United States."

The United States did not have to wait long. The American of "equivalent rank" turned out to be Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot held in the USSR. Subsequently, and in the suave cloak-and-dagger style of fictional entertainments, a political deal was made. And who stood on the Glienicke Bridge, between East and West Berlin, when Russia's master spy was traded for Powers? James B. Donovan, who might have been John Le Carre's British agent Leamas in "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold."

This is not fiction. But the drama of the Abel trial and the subsequent exchange of prisoners, narrated matter-of-factly from entries in Donovan's running private journal, would be hard to top by a writer of fiction under the rank of Eric Ambler.

One of the most interesting "villains" of recent story-telling, fiction or non-fiction, is Colonel Abel himself, whom Donovan respected very highly. He was in the classic pattern of fictional espionage: a linguist, artist, mathematician, at home with American law, intelligent, amusing, altogether a most likable chap.

Vignette: While waiting for the trial verdict, Donovan said to his client: "Rudolf, if all my work is successful, I may have to shoot you myself. Don't forget, I still am a Commander in Naval Intelligence." The prisoner replied: "You know, I think you would."

This is a fine book on the American legal process and an unusual glimpse into the mechanics of high-level espionage. It is thoroughly successful in every way and should, even at this price, have a wide and enthusiastic audience.

Strangers on a Bridge: The Case of Colonel Abel.
By James B. Donovan. Atheneum; 425 pp.; \$6.95.